BASIC ROLE-PLAYING

by

GREG STAFFORD
&
LYNN WILLIS

I. Introduction

WHAT IS A FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

A fantasy role-playing (FRP) game is one wherein the players construct characters who live out their lives in a specially made game-world. The characters need not be anything like the people who play them. Indeed, it is often more rewarding and enjoyable for players to create characters entirely unlike themselves. For instance, the most popular sorts are warriors and magicians - how many knights or wizards do you know in this world?

The game world is operated by a referee (sometimes called a game master, adventure master, dungeon master, etc.) who sets up the situations which the players confront and who also plays 'the world.'

An FRP game, then, is an interaction between players, who operate (run) characters, and a referee, who runs the world in which the adventures occur.

Most of the play is verbal exchange. The players tell the referee what they wish or intend to do. The referee then tells them if they can or may do it and, if not, what happens instead.

The actual game rules are important only when there is some question of success or failure, for the rules are the agreed-upon 'reality' which makes the game world understandable. The rules represent the common experience of the player-characters as well, and provide ways of determining the likelihood of success or failure before a situation is actually met. The rules also are the court of appeal: whenever there is a conflict between what the player-characters wish to do and what their game-world seems to let them do, then the rules are used to settle the dispute.

Suppose that a player tells the referee that he wishes to open a door and enter the room. The referee tells the player that the door is locked. The player says he will open it. Without rules, an argument or an arbitrary decision might result. The rules tell you how to discover the outcome of game actions.

Rules commonly use various die-rolling methods to determine the outcome of actions. Sometimes dice are used to find out whether or not something happened, such as the door which did or did not open. And sometimes there is a greater variety of outcomes possible, such as in combat when an attack succeeds or fails and is amplified or modified by a critical hit or weapon fumble. The amount of damage done by a successful attack depends on a die roll, as well.

In FRP, the referee has the immense responsibility of preparing a game world and playing it without bias. Most often he or she will set up a lair of some hostile monsters and bandits, and then he or she will play them against the player-characters. It is the referee's duty to make the opposition smart and mean, or there will be little challenge for the players, and they win be bored. But the referee must refrain from arbitrary decisions even though the players out-fight, out-wit, or out-guess him in the end.

The players also have a duty to play their characters within the known limits of the characters they run. Remaining unbiased is as difficult for them as for the referee. Just because a player happens to be a science major and knows how to concoct subtle and potent compounds does not mean that his shepherd character (without learning or training) can stroll to a game-world village and open an alchemy shop.

Operating within the limits of their characters presses the imagination of every player, and it is just that situation which names this genre of games, role-playing. The players themselves act out the roles endowed to their characters as though only those characters existed. Doing this is the most difficult and most satisfying part of the game.

Like anything else, role-playing is easier when you have done it a few times. Always have some idea of your character before you start, but also allow the events of his or her life to help shape the character's personality. Allow yourself different roles for different characters.

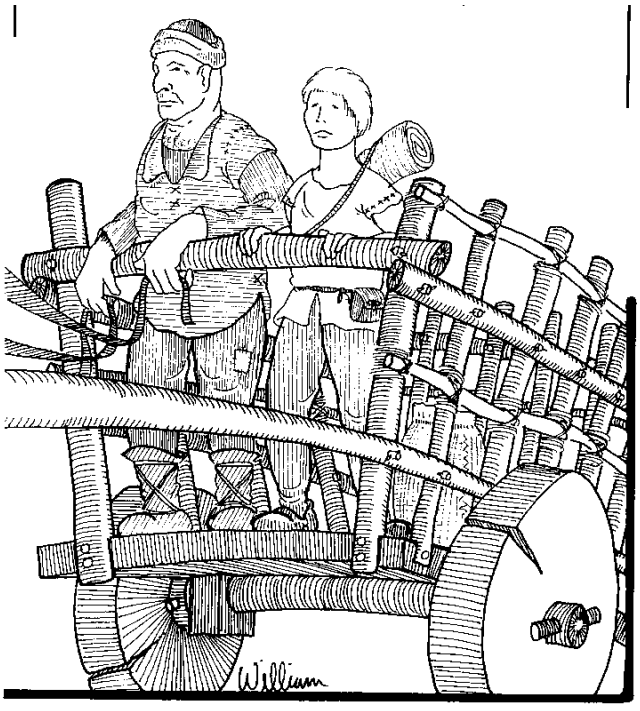
As you go through this book, you'll learn a basic role-playing system. The booklet explains the game mechanics which define the 'world machine.' But you must do the character creation which defines the character's personality. You do not need a prepared character to begin role-playing. By the time you finish this book you will have one, though, and this is a good time to get him started.

EXAMPLE

Your character is a young person, male or female (you get your choice). He knows little of the world, having always lived on a located in quiet countryside far in the middle of somewhere. His childhood has been happy and safe, and his adolescence has been innocent and ignorant. The game you play will start his chronicle of adulthood.

Today is exciting. The foreman of your father's farm is going to town to pick up supplies, and he has asked your character to go along. Since you've never been to town before, you can hardly wait.

The wagon trip is uneventful. You have seen the trees and fields of the farm before. The rutted dirt road passes by more farms, now ones you've never seen. From the wagon you spy a dark tower, broken and mysterious, atop a distant knoll. The foreman tells you that it is



Crag's Ruin, and that ghosts dwell there, and that his father once helped kill a troll nearby,, He also tells you not to worry, because he has his javelins with him and that you are safe.

(How does his talk make you feel? Are you worried by being so close to the ruins? Curious to see if ghosts really live there? Reassured by his statements? Confident in his javelins? Wish you had one yourself, even though you wouldn't know how to use it?)

The wagon trip takes three hours to complete. The village of Shirtown (so-named because you can buy cotton clothes there) is some 20 buildings scattered along a stream. To you, who have never seen anything bigger than a farmstead, Shirtown is a revelation.

The foreman hitches the horse and wagon to a rail at the trading post and waters the animal. Seeing your curiosity, he tells you to take a walk around. "Be careful," he says. "You're just a kid - there're foreigners in town."

(How do you feel about being called a kid? Will you talk back to him to prove you aren't? Does the idea of foreigners scare you or make you want to see them?)

Walking around the village, you see that the 'main street' has the trading post on it, a boarding house with a painted sign overhead, an office with words written on the door, a stable, and a number of fancy houses painted with colors much brighter than any used on your farm.

A dozen or so people walk along also, most briskly on business.

You turn from the main street along one of the small trails which weave behind building and along garden plots. You suppose that the people who tend the fields around Shirtown actually live in town, and that these are their personal gardens. A baby cries fretfully from a house on your left. Geese waddle toward the creek.

Bored, you return to the main street. The foreman is not visible, evidently inside, conducting business.

Suddenly a man, wearing helmet and armor with a shield strapped to his back and a sword at his side, staggers out of the building near you, stumbles, and crashes into you. You are knocked down and look at him from the ground. He swears at you and turns his back, moving away.

(Are you angry? Frightened? Do you swear back at him, possibly angering him further? Or are you impressed, wishing you had weapons and armor and a bellyful of drink?)

As you watch, he turns the corner and falls down, lying in a heap and snoring. Looking quickly around, you see that no one is nearby, to see either you or him A money bag is lying on the ground near him, obviously dropped from his hand.

(What do you do? Want some quick cash? How about an easy sword? Maybe he won't even wake up if you take off his helmet. Here is an opportunity which may well shape the rest of your life. What will it be, an easy, if dishonest, chance to get ahead in the world quickly? An honest attempt to help this stranger? Should you leave him to his troubles and go on? Whatever you wish will happen, since there is no referee right now to wake him!)

Farther down the street a lady sits atop a barrel. She is unlike any you've seen before. Her face is heavily made up, something you've heard of but never seen. She smiles at you when you approach and calls you over. She offers to sell you a flask of magical drink.

(Want to buy? Got any money? If not, you honest soul, then she will give it to you for free if you promise to do her a favor, unspecified, sometime in the future. She will make you swear on your soul if you do take it, an oath which has some import to you or anyone living here. She doesn't even insist that you drink it now. You may take it and save it, or ask the foreman what it is...)

You wander back to the wagon.

There you have the start of it. Not a lot to do, for sure, but several opportunities to present your character with some personality. Honest or dishonest? Gullible or wary? In debt to that old con-woman or still free? These are traits and events which can come up again in your young life, and maybe with far-reaching effect.

Developing a character will also depend upon the basic abilities which the character has, and those will be discussed below. But you must clothe the numbers with imagination, and that is the real play in the game.

IS IT FUN? - COOPERATION AND COMPETITION

Gaming is social. If you want to use your imagination alone, you could read a book. But be warned: when a number of people get together cooperatively, they can form a communal fantasy far more interesting and imaginative than could any one person, and the joint effort results in an extremely satisfying experience for all involved.

Players must work together. For instance, a party of adventurers will not survive against a batch of monsters if they are not willing to aid each other, heal each other, and guard each other. This is not to say that you cannot play a back-stabbing thief, only to suggest that if everyone plays that way, there will be no incentive to play together. There must be honor even among thieves, so far as gaming goes: if all of your characters are cut-throats, who will want to play with you?

There also needs to be cooperation between players and the referee. Though the referee does mastermind the world and does set up and run the details, it's also true that the game remains a game for him as well, and that he likes to have fun playing too. The player-characters should pit themselves against the world, not the referee. The referee should not be afraid to ask others for their opinions on game matters, and the players should not be afraid of debating rules questions or play opportunities with the referee. Referee rulings should be final, though, and players must be willing to take losses if the referee is adamant in his thinking. Work out questions by discussion, not fiat, and players and referee should be willing to change their minds if necessary, and occasionally change the game somewhat to adjust to the situation at hand.

Simple communication will build an enjoyable and understandable world to play in. The rewards of cooperation are great; hostility and resentment are fatal to play. Remember, the object of all this is to have fun.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Uniquely and admirably, in FRP there are no winners and losers in the normal competitive sense. Play is cooperative, wherein the participants work together for a common goal. The opponent is some alien or hostile situation controlled by an impartial referee, not another player.

Winning in such a situation depends on whether or not the player-characters succeed in their goal. Losing is what happens if they fail (they may just try again later). The only real losers are those characters - not players - who die in the attempt.

Even then there is satisfaction in dying gloriously, and recounting such a deed of honor.

LIFE AND DEATH

Danger is a common part of role-playing. There is satisfaction in non-dangerous occupations, and players are urged to have some non-combative characters if time allows. But the sharpest spice is the performance of characters in life-or-death situations. Dying is the one experience we cannot know more than once, and few of us are interested in hurrying-up our chance for the knowledge. Role-playing gives us surrogate danger without the risk.

Even so, you will experience real emotion when your characters gain victories, and undergo real agony when they die. Players and their characters have a very intimate relation, and the longer a player runs his character well, the more likely there will be a sense of loss when death comes and resurrection is not possible. This can be traumatic if you are too close to the characters at hand. For this reason, people are advised to never play themselves in a game. Always maintain a proper mental attitude towards the game, and remember that it is only imagination, no matter how real it seems during play.

Possibility of loss makes success rewarding. Commit your characters to battle and play without restraint.

II. MATERIALS

DICE AND HOW TO READ THEM

Basic Role-Playing uses a number of different dice. If you bought this booklet separately, chit-dice are included on the center insert. Dice sets are available at game stores or by mail. For convenience, players use their own sets, but also will share.

Four types of dice will commonly be used: they are 20-sided, 8-sided, 6-sided, and 4-sided dice. When two 20-sided dice are used together, or when one 20-sided die is rolled twice, a number between 01-100 is generated - a 'percentile roll.'

Abbreviations are used to designate these dice. The letter D stands for the word Dice. This letter will be followed by a number denoting the number of sides on the die being used.

Thus a D20 is a 20-sided die, a D6 is a 6-sided die, and a D100 is a pair of 20-sided dice used as percentile dice.

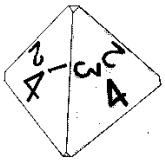
Designations may be preceded by a number. This number tells the player the amount of that kind of dice to roll. For instance, 2D6 means that two 6-sided dice should be rolled and their results added together. If you don't have the right number of that kind of die, roll the one you have for the number of times indicated, and total the result.

Sometimes additions must be made to die rolls. You might see "1D6+1". The number following the plus sign should be added to the result of the 1D6 roll. "1D6+1" means that the final result must be between 2 and 7, though the exact result depends on the actual roll of the D6.

Finally, there are occasional results requiring that different dice be rolled at one time. If a weapon does 1D6+2D4 damage, the actual damage will be found by rolling the three requested dice and summing their results.

READING THE DICE

Most of us are familiar with the good old cubical D6. We read it by throwing it so that it rolls, and then taking the number which is face up on the die as the result. This is the method used for reading D8 as well. The top number is the number rolled.

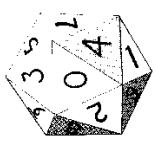


D4

D4s are more difficult. They are pyramid-shaped and have no apparent top to read. In their case the number rolled is the one which is right-side-up on the sides of the die after it is thrown. These dice rarely roll, and it is advised that you get a random result by tossing them so that they tumble in the air before landing.

D8

Though D20 is also read from the top, as with D6 and D8, they have only two sets of single digit numbers O-9 on their sides. What to do?



D20

There are two usual ways to make a D20 yield 20 different numbers. You can take a marking pen and mark one each of the numbers from 0-9 to distinguish them from the other set of ten numbers, and then decide whether the marked or the unmarked numbers represent the single digits. The others will be the 'teen' numbers. Green pens will yield 'teen is green', but any color will do. As a D20, the low zero will be 10, and the high zero will be 20.

An alternate method does not mark the dice. Roll the D20 and any other die at the same time. The other die result deters mines whether the D20 is a single digit or a double digit number: low equals 1-10, and high equals 11-20.

Dl00 rolls are actually easier. If you have one D20, you need to roll it twice. The first roll is the 'tens' roll, and the second roll is the 'ones.' If you roll a 5 the first time and an 8 the second time, you've rolled 58. "00" always equals 100.

With two D20 of different colors, you need only roll both at the same time to read the D100 number. Decide which color is the 'tens' and which is the 'ones.' Then always read the dice the same way. If you are using the chit-dice, the first number you turn up is the tens number.

CHARACTER SHEET

On the next page are three BRP character forms. Any one form holds all the immediate character info you'll need about a particular character. You'll learn later to fill out the form and what the sections mean. Photo-copy the page so that you can reuse the forms; a completed form is on page 16.

FIGURES AND FOCUS

Basic Role-Playing can be played as a strictly verbal game, as you can see from the example about the farmer's child coming to the big city. But many games go farther than this, and play with miniature figures and a battleboard.

Focus is always useful, for all the players can then weave their imaginations into the same framework. For instance, setting up a marching order for a party of Adventurers to travel overland shows which characters will be in a position to speak to each; this may be significant later if a character must choose one person out of many to aid.

Aiding rules interpretations is an excellent reason for using figures. When the figures are on the table, it is possible to see that your friends are blocking the field of fire your bow might have, or it will show which characters are first assailed by giant wasps striking from the flank, or how long it win take for one character to aid another. With figures, measurement provides

CHARACTER NAME _____ **PLAYER** _____

STR ___			1	2	3	4	5	W 1 ___	W 2 ___	OTHER	
CON ___		**HIT**	6	7	8	9	10	Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
SIZ ___		**POINTS**	11	12	13	14	15	Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
INT ___	Idea Roll ___		16	17	18	19	20	Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
POW ___	Luck Roll ___							Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	
DEX ___	Dodge Roll ___	ARMOR ___								___	
CHA ___	Persuasion ___							W 3 ___	W 4 ___	___	
JUMP	___	*MOVE QUIETLY* ___						Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
CLIMB	___	*THROW* ___						Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
LISTEN	___	*HIDE* ___						Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
SPOT HIDDEN	___	*FIRST AID* ___						Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	

photocopy for personal use only

Copyright © 1980 Chaosium Inc.

CHARACTER NAME _____ **PLAYER** _____

STR ___			1	2	3	4	5	W 1 ___	W 2 ___	OTHER	
CON ___		**HIT**	6	7	8	9	10	Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
SIZ ___		**POINTS**	11	12	13	14	15	Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
INT ___	Idea Roll ___		16	17	18	19	20	Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
POW ___	Luck Roll ___							Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	
DEX ___	Dodge Roll ___	ARMOR ___								___	
CHA ___	Persuasion ___							W 3 ___	W 4 ___	___	
JUMP	___	*MOVE QUIETLY* ___						Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
CLIMB	___	*THROW* ___						Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
LISTEN	___	*HIDE* ___						Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
SPOT HIDDEN	___	*FIRST AID* ___						Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	

photocopy for personal use only

Copyright © 1980 Chaosium Inc.

CHARACTER NAME _____ **PLAYER** _____

STR ___			1	2	3	4	5	W 1 ___	W 2 ___	OTHER	
CON ___		**HIT**	6	7	8	9	10	Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
SIZ ___		**POINTS**	11	12	13	14	15	Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
INT ___	Idea Roll ___		16	17	18	19	20	Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
POW ___	Luck Roll ___							Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	
DEX ___	Dodge Roll ___	ARMOR ___								___	
CHA ___	Persuasion ___							W 3 ___	W 4 ___	___	
JUMP	___	*MOVE QUIETLY* ___						Attack ___	Attack ___	___	
CLIMB	___	*THROW* ___						Damage ___	Damage ___	___	
LISTEN	___	*HIDE* ___						Parry ___	Parry ___	___	
SPOT HIDDEN	___	*FIRST AID* ___						Hit Points ___	Hit Points ___	___	

photocopy for personal use only

Copyright © 1980 Chaosium Inc.

answers to "My guy was supposed to be here," and "Where is the elephant?" Counters can easily act as figures.

A few props provide drama. Large ruins can be constructed with childrens' plastic blocks. Scrounging will unearth railroad accessories, cake decorations, weird things from hardware bins, and so on. Styrofoam packaging can be carved to different shapes. Some HO-scale trees, toy fences, and a large rock give otherwise lifeless melees intriguing possibilities for deployment and use of special skills.

Figures are normally 1" high lead miniatures, purchasable at many game and hobby stores, or ordered by mail. Some manufacturers publish attractive cardboard figures. Many people make good use of economical available toy figures. Preferences and pocketbooks influence what is used. No one is likely to have every kind of monster or person which a game demands. Substitutions are common.

THE BATTLEBOARD

If you use figures, you will also want a battleboard. A battleboard is made of almost anything, but is commonly a large sheet of paper which can be drawn on and disposed of afterward or reused each time with added details. Also popular are transparent plastic sheets which can be written on with china markers or grease pencils which can be erased and reused.

Sometimes the referee may pre-draw a location or floorplan, and at other times he may use such sheets to record terrain as play develops. If you bought this book separately, there is a battleboard included as an insert. 'Battleboard' is a term carried over from the days when FRP was mainly fighting. Now there are many noncombative situations.

It is often useful for the referee to draw out the area of activity on an ordinary sheet of paper and to note the scale there. When the action shifts to individual scale, the referee turns to the battleboard.

III. Life From Statistics

NAMING YOUR CHARACTER

How you name your character may depend upon the campaign in which you play. Some campaigns allow only some specifically appropriate type of name, such as using only Scandinavian names for a Viking campaign. This is relatively easy, since lists of names can be found in any library's reference section. Some campaigns allow names of any sort, such as one where French-Canadian politicians appear beside American movie stars and Greco-Roman legendaries. This is largely a matter of taste, preferences and what everyone agrees to.

If you have trouble thinking of a name for a new character, then choose one relatively neutral, such as Mudd, Glop, John, Arnold, or even Nameless. It is possible to change your characters' names later, especially if they do something significant which their companions will remember. Thus they might be known as Dragonslayer, Panicky, or Prunes instead of their original name.

If you are at a loss, you can always choose a well-known name from popular fiction. Be warned to avoid the best-known ones, like Conan or Frodo. That way you won't suffer the embarrassment of being one of 12 people with identically-named characters in the same adventure. Always take a name you and your character can live with, and remember that characters with descriptive names (like 'Strongman') frequently may be tested about them by referees.

CHARACTER CREATION & CHARACTERISTICS

Every player starts in role-playing by creating a character. The numbers rolled which represent his basic characteristics which go a long way towards determining his relative worth and value in the game world.

The seven basic characteristics are Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Size (SIZ), Intelligence (INT), Power (POW), Dexterity (DEX), and Charisma (CHA).

For human beings, these basic characteristics are found by rolling 3D6 once for each of the seven. Doing this yields seven numbers which should be written down in the appropriate places on the character sheet. Using 3D6, each number will be not less than 3 and not more than 18. You need not accept every roll, though - you might, for instance, make a personal rule that any roll below 10 has 3-4 added to it, so that the resulting character is not ridiculously weak in a specific characteristic. You are free to ignore the existence of characters who do not interest you. In fact, you are free to do what you will with the game or the characters! If your fantasy world widens, and you build a home base, you could populate your home farm or castle with characters you otherwise might not run. After all, somebody has to wash the windows and answer the door, and rub down your war horse after adventuring!

Take this opportunity to roll up the characteristics for your own character, and copy the results onto one of the character forms. *(The authors also will roll up the characteristics of one Jon Average, whom you'll see displayed on the last page.)*

STR is Strength. This measures the muscle-power of the character. STR measures what and how easily he or she can pick up something. *(We rolled a 4 for Jon, and that's not good. We'll add three to it, as discussed above, to give him a 7 - he still won't win in arm-wrestling, but he can lift a sword now.)*

CON is Constitution, a relative measure of health. From CON you can figure a character's hit points (HP). These tell the amount of damage a character can take before becoming unconscious or dead. In Basic Role-Playing, CON points are identical in amount to a character's HP; also circle that HP number on the character form. Whenever damaged, mark off the number of damage points taken directly on the Hit Point section. Damage can be repaired by Healing, which raises the HP number, and CON will also resist poison and disease, as explained later. Note that CON is not lowered by damage. *(Luckily for Jon, the authors rolled a 14. He may not be strong, but he is healthy! As an example, by the way, if Jon were hit by an arrow which did 3 points of damage, his HP would become 11, but his CON would remain 14.)*

SIZ is Size, combining height and weight into one figure. This will be important if something wants to lift your character, or if he or she needs to squeeze into a small space, or even help determine who in an adventuring party is first attacked. *(The roll for Jon is 10 - almost average. If Jon were in the U.S.A., he would be about 5'9" tall.)*

INT is Intelligence; your character is that smart and no smarter. It's hard to play a smart character if you aren't, and it's almost as hard for a smart person to play a dumb one. For that reason the 'Idea Roll' is used. The character's INT is multiplied times a number determined by the referee, and then the character tries to roll equal to or less than the number, to "really" think of it. Commonly, the multiplier is 5, but never more than 5. A player may have to play a character who is ignorant of facts the player knows, and sometimes the referee

but which the player doesn't, since he is unfamiliar with the scenario. Thus a character sees arcane symbols chalked on a wall. The player does not know the meaning, but the referee has him make his INTx5 die roll on D100. A roll of less than INTx5 means the character recognized the meaning of the symbols. *(Aha! Jon's INT roll is 14. He is smarter than most, and he will find it easier to learn the ropes in the world in which he is awakening. His INT roll is 14x5, or 70, which is written in the space provided.)*

POW is Power, the measure of a person's soul, piety, or will. In games with magic, POW resists spells cast at the character and powers cast spells. Use it also as a 'Luck Roll' for tight spots. For instance, if a character falls down a hole, he might land upright and take no damage. Determine if this occurs by rolling his POWx5 on D100. *(Jon's POW is normal. He probably will not be extremely religious or become expert in magic unless he finds a way to raise his POW. His luck roll is llx5, or 55, which is written in the space provided. In the preceding instance, if Jon had rolled 56, he would not have been lucky, and the referee would determine the damage roll he then would have to make.)*

DEX is Dexterity, or how quick a character is. In combat, the character with the higher DEX hits first, hopefully disabling his opponent before being hit himself. Characters can dodge when they see something coming from a distance, such as a rolling rock or a charging bear, and concentrates on getting out of the way. The typical 'Dodge Roll' is DEXx5 on D100. *(The authors roll a DEX of 14 for Jon! Except for that bad beginning STR roll, he's getting pretty good. Note that his dodge roll will be 14x5, or 70, and should be written down.)*

CHA is Charisma, a measurement of the intangible ability to inspire others to follow or listen to a character. Use it as a persuasion roll, when the character is trying to talk his way out of a tight spot, or whcn he is trying to convince someone to obey him. Suppose some local authorities notice your character is a stranger and question him or her: you could try your persuasion roll to get away. The referee may rule it CHAx5, or even CHAx3 if the authorities have reason to be suspicious. And if you're trying to talk to a "non-player character" (NPC) – a character run by the referee - the NPC might try his INTx5 and not be persuaded! *(Oh-oh! Jon's CHA is only 6. Well, we'll add 3 to it, to bring it up somewhere near normal, but probably Jon should tell the truth as often as possible! His persuasion roll will be 45 on D100, by the way.)*

Other uses of these characteristics will be explained in chapters to come. In many odd situations not covered in these rules it is possible to see one of the characteristics as being appropriately influential in a decision. Sometimes it may be a combination of characteristics, such as adding SIZ+STR+CHA when trying to bluff down the local bully to leave you alone. Situations we arise not covered by the rules, and using characteristics in this way is usually the quickest and most convenient way to decide the results.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE?

Whether your character is heroic or dastardly, you'll want him to act and succeed. In Basic Role-Playing your character can succeed in three ways: (1) automatic actions, (2) simple percentile rolls, and (3) the resistance table rolls. These will be discussed separately.

AUTOMATIC ACTIONS

This term describes activities which are always successful under normal circumstances. There is no need to roll any dice for these. They are assumed 100% successful. These include walking, running, talking, seeing, hearing, and any other normal basic function.

Attempting to do these things under extraordinary conditions, or trying to do them with close scrutiny, requires a die roll, as outlined in the next section.

SIMPLE PERCENTILE ROLLS

Ordinary actions performed under stress or requiring concentration need a die roll to be successful. This includes Climbing, Jumping, Spotting Hidden Items, Listening, or Moving Quietly. Further, any action which requires a specific special skill to do requires a die roll as well. Examples of these are Riding, Swimming, Throwing, or Picking Pockets.

A list of common skills is given below, with normal starting percentages.

Jumping	*45%*	*Throw*	*45%*
Climbing	*55%*	*Fist*	*50%*
Listening	*45%*	*Hide*	*55%*
Spot Hidden	*25%*	*First Aid*	*45%*
Move Quietly	*25%*		

Fighting skills are also in this category. The brawling ability of Fist is included, as is Throw. Tool-using people easily use Hitting With a Stick - in weapon terms this is called a light mace, and that you'll see in the example below.

EXAMPLE

One day while loafing outside, you hear a shriek from inside the house. Your mother is yelling her head off. Without hesitation you leap up and dash inside to see what the ruckus is.

There is a large dirty rat cowering in the ashes of the fireplace. You know your mother hates rats, so you pick up the nearest weapons - a coal shovel.

The chance to hit with a coal shovel is the same as your chance to hit with a mace, or 25%. To see whether or not you do hit the rat, you must roll D100 until you roll less than 25. A roll that low means that you did hit the rat. With your percentile dice, roll until you do kill it.

Congratulations! Your mother won't even scold you for loafing now!

RESISTANCE TABLE ROLLS

The final method of determining success is by using the Resistance Table. It makes it easy to figure out if your character succeeds in pitting some characteristic of his against something else, also expressed as a simple number comparable to the characteristic. The Table is a ready-to~use version of the formula devised to solve such problems; it's printed on page 16.

To use it, take the active person's characteristic and find it on the upper, horizontal entry. Then find the passive object's characteristic on the left-hand, vertical line. Cross-index them and you have the maximum number you can roll and still succeed in the task.

For instance, a character with of STR 9 wishes to push open a door that is stuck. The referee determines that the door has STR 4. Checking the Resistance Table you'll see that he needs to roll 75% or less or succeed. If he rolls that, then the door has been pushed open.

Sometimes it is more appropriate to pit one characteristic against another. In the example below, it is appropriate to pit the character's STR against the SIZ of the object being lifted. Other examples will be listed later.

EXAMPLE

Your foreman has told you to load the wagon with the items he's bought, while he goes and has a drink. Listed below are a number of items in ascending SIZ which you must load. Use the Resistance Table and figure out whether or not you can lift them onto the wagon.

1	*hammer*
2	*duck*
3	*goldsmith's anvil*
4	*ordinary house dog*
5	*a wagon wheel*
6	*an eagle*
7	*a large chest (empty)*
8	*bushel of grain*
9	*a big table*
10	*a person-sized scarecrow*
11	*a timber wolf*
12	*an ironsmith's anvil*
13	*the tapestry in the tax office*
14	*a keg full of liquid*
15	*a small donkey*
16	*a great big stump*
17	*the huge wolf killed 8 years ago*
18	*a sleeping barbarian*
19	*a three-man boat*
20	*a log for 3 men to use as a ram*
21	*the biggest guy you will ever see*
22	*the black rock by the inn*
23	*a wheeled farrow*
24	*a 2-wheel cart*
25	*an average horse*
...36	*a bison*
...40	*a 4-wheel wagon*
...60	*a triceratops*

As you can see, there is a practical top-end to the items you can lift. It is possible to lift very big things with proper body mechanics (i.e., a lucky die roll) but it is not normal to do so.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: ARM WRESTLING

Having done the job, or given up, you decide to find the foreman. In the bar a number of burlies and braggarts are arm wrestling. They ask if you'd care to wager on your arm.

How to do it: first, you already know your STR, and you must pit it against the other person's. You find the roll which you need, then find the roll which the other person needs. Both rolls are made simultaneously. If both characters make their roll, then there is no result, and the wrestling continues. If one of you makes it and the other fails, then the bout is over and the person who made it is the winner.

Here are three people who you may wish to arm wresle with: Skinny Sam(STR 6), Ordinary Ogbert (STR l2), and Burly Bob (STR 17).

Good Old Burly Bob

These three methods of determining success give you all the mechanics you need for a character to perform normal activities. Below is a short scenario which you can practice with. When you've done it, you'11 be experienced enough to enter the militia, where you'll learn more complex uses of these methods.

NEXT EXAMPLE: A CROSS-COUNTRY JAUNT

It is another fine summer day, and your character has nothing to do. He or she decides to take a walk through the countryside.

Walk in any direction. Leave the house, barn, and fields behind. Run a little and stretch. Look at that tree over there. Think you can climb it? Give it a try!

From the tree you take a look around. See anything special? Try rolling your Spot Hidden Item skill. What is that in the distance? If you made your Spot Hidden roll then you see that it is a wolf lurking around the sheep pasture. If you didn't make your roll, you will not discover this until you draw closer.

Climb down from the tree and set off cross-country for a closer look. After a short time you can get close enough to see the wolf. You are down-wind from it, so it hasn't smelled you yet and is unaware of your presence.

Try to make your Spot Hidden Item roll again as you look past the wolf to try to see what the wolf is studying so intently. If you made your roll, then you do, indeed, see the lamb toward which the wolf creeps.

What will you do? You know this is a bad thing for your farm. In a role-playing situation there is often no one to give hints about what to do. Do you want to run off and get help? A helpful referee may suggest that wolves, alone, are quite cowardly. If so, you will know that throwing rocks and yelling ought to work.

But first you want to edge closer. Try to make your Move Quietly roll. If you do get closer, then you will have a better chance of hitting it with a rock.

Now you are within range. If you did not make your Move Quietly roll, then the wolf has turned to face you. It looks meaner face to face, doesn't it?

If it is facing you, then the wolf can make its 'dodge' roll (its DEX is 12, so its dodge is 60%). If it hasn't heard you, then it cannot dodge the first rock you throw.

You throw the rock! Roll D100: if you roll less than 45%, it is hit. If it is facing you, the wolf may make its dodge roll. If it dodges, then your rock missed it after all.

Throw rocks at it for a while, making first your Throw skill, then its dodge. If you hit it once without it doing that throw successfully, then it will be convinced enough and slink off. If it merely dodges several rocks, then it will still slink off, but probably with a wolvish smirk at your lack of skill.

It is gone.

Good work! First rats, and now wolves - what fate isn't open to such an up-and-coming individual?

IV. Rewards Of Success

EXPERIENCE

A great pleasure of continued role-playing is watching and participating in the advancement of a character from his humble beginnings to his ultimate fate. Characters grow and change, generally getting better at whatever they attempt to do. There is real satisfaction in having characters be successful.

Success is measured in many ways. Your character may be important in whatever local game in which he participates. He may be a knight or warrior, a cleric or magician, a nobleman or a wicked tyrant. How this occurs depends upon how the par ticular game has been established.

These rules standardize another measurement, advancement through experience. Simply put, the more you use a skill, the more you learn about it and the better you get at it. This includes concrete skills, such as swordfighting or jumping, abstract ones such as Listening, or exotic skills in advanced versions of the game.

Whenever your character has finished an adventure, typically after play is done and before everyone goes home, you should check over his character sheet to see what skills were used during play. If your character succeeded in using skills, they should have been marked on the sheet. Just trying is not enough to learn by - you must succeed. No matter how many times a character succeeds in a skill, he gets only one chance, between adventures, to learn by experience.

For each skill he used successfully, subtract his current skill level from 100%. That gives you his 'learning threshold' for that particular skill. Then roll D100 and try to roll a number equal to or smaller than his threshold for the skill. If you do not roll that low, then he hasn't learned from his experience. If you did roll low enough, then your character did learn something, and you add 5% to that skill.

Repeat the procedure for all the skills used in the run. Note here that a successful weapon attack does not raise the parry skill, and vice versa.

EXAMPLE

Torban the Nimble successfully used two skills on his last adventure, Jumping and spear parry. His current threshold for Jumping is 35%, while for spear parry it is 65%.

For Jumping, 100 minus 35 equals a 65% chance to learn. His player rolls a 48, a success! On his next adventure, Torban will have a Jumping skill of 40%.

For the spear parry, 100 minus 65 equals a 35% chance to learn. His player rolls a 39, a near miss but not enough to be successful. On his next adventure, Torban's spear parry will remain at 65%.

You can see that successfully doing something you're poor at is hard, but also that if you succeed at it then you're likely to learn from the experience. Conversely, if you're good at a skill you'll usually succeed at it, but it will get progressively harder to increase your skills.

Finally, remember that characteristic rolls, such as the dodge roll or the luck roll, do not increase this way. Those are are constant unless the characteristic itself should change for some reason.

TREASURE

Raw loot is another important source of success. Much FRP is based upon heroic exploits by warriors and their ilk. A complete campaign will have places to buy useful goods or to just spend money frivolously. It is important to be able to upgrade the armor, occasionally buy new weapons, and (where the campaign allows it) to purchase training in skills and magic.

Treasure is often overlooked, even by referees. If you can carry them, you can always cart off armor and weapons, and another option is to skin monsters and sell their pelts. Always search for hidden traps and secret compartments before giving up the search for moneys The monsters didn't put it in the open for you to stumble over!

V. Costs Of Failure

If success is rewarded, failure is not. It is painful to miss out on a chance, even if it has no immediate effect on your character other than not bringing home the rich merchant's daughter just then. While your character may get a bit hungry without money, that will only motivate him strongly on the next adventure. But there can be worse fates, such as the failure to finish climbing up that rope, or failing to make a parry.

TAKING DAMAGE

Damage is a measure of the hurt which your characters' bodies can take. Damage is inflicted whenever there is a physical cause, such as falling from a height or being stabbed.

Whenever a character is hit, the amount of damage he receives is subtracted from the total HP available. In *Basic Role-Playing* there is no penalty for taking cumulative damage until the character is down to 1 HP or less.

When a character has 1 HP left, he goes unconscious. This means the character lives but will stay unconscious till aided by outsiders. He will not wake naturally. He must be tended till he heals (see below) or until enough First Aid is given to wake him.

EXAMPLE

Jomo Bubble jumps from a 4-meters-high embankment to aid his friend who is fighting a sea monster. Unfortunately for Jomo, his intentions outstrip his abilities, and he fails to make his Jumping roll. Falling from a height of 4 meters will give him 2D6 damage. The referee happens to roll the maximum of 12 - poor Jomo! He has only 13 HP, and so he is knocked cold, a bleeding, rumpled heap also requiring rescue.

DEATH, HEALING, and FIRST AID

When a character takes more damage than he has hit points, he dies. When a character dies, there may or may not be various means of resurrecting him, depending on the possible expansions added to BRP. It is generally a sorrowful occasion. Characters may or may not wish to bring the body back. But whether they do or not, they probably will loot the body.

Healing is a natural process wherein the body regenerates HP. This occurs for any living creature. Healing happens at the rate of 1 HP per week of game time. Thus Jomo Bubble's indiscretion will not be naturally healed for 12 weeks, though Jomo may adventure with fewer than his maximum HP.

A successful roll on the First Aid skill means that the character has reduced the damage caused by a wound of any kind, poison, or fast-acting disease by a roll of D3 hit points. This skill also stops bleeding and awakens an unconscious character. First Aid can be successfully applied only once to any one wound, disease, to poisoning.

VI. Military Skills

"Welcome to the Militia. I am Reeve Holmsman. I'm going to train you to flght and survive. You're all old enough – you can run and jump, you know what you can lift and how far you can walk in a day. Probably already been in a fight or two if my memory serves me right, though you youngsters won't remember how you fought, just what the outcome was. Well, I'm going to teach you to remember how to fight.

"I can't do it all, though. And if I didn't have this limp, I wouldn't even be here to try - I'd be out on the ridges looking for trolls. Cowards might not like to admit it, but there's a thrill to battle. When it's just you and that troll and your spear, you find out quick enough if you're a man or not!

"Or a woman! Excuse me, miss! Always good to have women along on a run. My wife used to Adventure a lot, and none of the kids were unhappy about it the day that she skewered a grizzly through the heart with her spear.

"But as I was saying, I can teach you, but you'll have to do the learning. Because my leg is touchy today, I'll do it easier than I might, too. First off, my friend Godfrey we give all of you a leather jerkin, leggins, and a hood. That'll be all the armor you get for now, kids, and remember that this stuff won't turn much of a blade."

ARMOR AND HOW IT WORKS

As previously noted, it is possible for a character to be damaged through combat or accident. In most cases a character wearing armor is protected by it from taking the damage.

All armor has a point value telling you how good it is in stopping damage. The most common armor is leather, and it is worth 2 points. This is roughly equivalent to a heavy motors cycle jacket. The best armor available is plate armor like knights wear. It is worth 6 points.

Whenever a character is wearing armor and takes damage, the point value of the armor is subtracted from the amount of damage. The remainder of the damage is passed on to the character's body HP.

For example, a character wearing 2 point armor is struck by an arrow doing 5 points of damage. The value of the armour is subtracted first, so that 2 of the 5 points of damage are nullified. The rest, 3 points, pass onto the body and are subtracted from the HP.

"That leather will help slow it down, but it sure won't save you from damage. If you value your skin, pay good attention to lesson two - shields and why we love them. Yessir, if I had my way you'd all train with shields for a year, that's what I think!"

I LOVE MY SHIELD

Shields work like armor in that they block damage. But a shield generally blocks more damage than armor, there being an average of 12 points for common shields. Unlike armor, to block damage the shield first must be successfully used to parry. (A shield parry is an ability with a D100 chance to succeed.)

Suppose a character is attacked by a bear. The bear swipes with his paw and does 15 points of damage. The character now must roll to see if he successfully parries. In this example, he does. His shield blocks 12 points of damage, leaving only 3 that penetrate the shield. If the character had any armor on that would further block damage, presume that it was leather and therefore blocked 2 more points of damage. Therefore only 1 point of damage would penetrate both shield and armor and have to be subtracted from the HP. Without the shield, the character would have taken 13 points damage, possibly enough to kill him!

MARTIAL SKILLS

Because FRP games usually take place in a primitive, non-technological environment, we concentrate on ancient weapons. In general, combat is a combination of a number of skills used by a fighter against another (an attack) or to help himself (a parry). In all cases this is a specific simple percentile die roll resolution, as outlined above.

TYPES OF WEAPONS

A weapon can be a sword or a rock or a coal shovel grabbed from the corner. In *Basic Role-Playing* there are five weapon types: natural weapons, hand weapons, thrusting weapons, thrown weapons, and missile machines. Every weapon has a different percentage skill for their use in attack and their use in parry. These skills are used differently and it will develop independently of each other.

HAND WEAPONS are of four kinds: maces, axes, swords, and daggers. 'Mace' describes any blunt instrument, ranging from a big stick to an elaborately shod and studded imple-

ment. It is used for bashing and for parrying, and it takes a good amount of damage compared to other hand weapons. It does the least amount of damage of the three kinds of hand weapons, but it is also the easiest to use without any training, and hence has the highest attack percentage for beginners.

An axe does the most damage of the three kinds of hand weapons, but it takes less damage before breaking than a mace does, and it is harder to use, so it has a lower beginning attack percentage.

Swords are traditional hand weapon favorites because they do more damage than a mace (though less than an axe) and also take a large amount of damage before breaking. But a sword is the hardest hand weapon to learn to use, and therefore has the lowest attack percentage to start.

Daggers are the traditional second weapon of adventurers. A character usually will carry a dagger even if otherwise weaponless.

THRUSTING WEAPONS include only one kind here, the spear. For the play purposes of *Basic Role-Playing* this is specified to be a two-handed spear. This means that the same weapon must be used to attack and to parry with. The spear does a fair amount of damage compared to the other weapons listed, and has a reasonable beginning attack percentage. Its disadvantage is that it is relatively fragile and often breaks during combat. But it is the only weapon which can be used from the second rank. This means that a person with a spear can stand behind someone else and still be able to attack. Additionally, a spear is a weapon which can impale, as defined below.

THROWN WEAPONS include javelins and rocks. They are not used to parry with, nor can they be parried (though a target may dodge them, as mentioned previously). Javelins are simply thrown spears. They do fair damage and may also impale. Thrown rocks are the simplest of weapons and have a good beginning attack percentage. They usually do not do much damage when opposed by any armor.

MISSILE MACHINES here include only bows. A bow is a relatively difficult weapon to master and so has a poor initial attacking ability, but it does have the best range and does a fair amount of damage. Importantly, it also impales.

NATURAL WEAPONS include the fist and the kick. These start with high attack percentages and work well against unarmored victims, but are relatively useless against armor.

THE SHIELD is not a weapon, per se, but is still the most important item in a fighting man's armament. It has a fair beginning parry percentage, but no beginning attack percentage because it not be used offensively. It takes a fair amount of damage when compared to a weapon. But when a shield takes damage, the effects from successive blows are not cumulative: a shield can take blow after blow and not break, while any weapon will give way after a while.

THE IMPALE

An 'impale' is a special type of successful attack which can be done by long pointed weapons which are used for thrusting. Here the impaling weapons are the spear, dagger, javelin, and the arrow. When a person succeeds in an attack with one of these, he always should notice if he rolled lower than 20% of the required attack. If he did, he impaled his foe.

This means that the thrusting weapon happened by chance to find a joint in the foe's armor and to have slipped in driving deep into vital organs or bone. Because of this, two special things happen:

(1) More damage is done. The attacker must roll the normal damage (1D8+l for a spear, for example) and then add the maximum damage possible with that weapon to the damage they already rolled. An impaling spear would do an automatic 9 points of damage, plus whatever the attacker rolled - a devastating blow of a minimum of 10 points and a possible maximum of 18 points damage!

(2) The attacking weapon is stuck in the enemy's body. (This was a common event in medieval battles.) The next melee round the attacker can try to pull it out by rolling D100 equal to or less than their impale percentage x 2.

WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	*Type*	*Beginning Attack & Parry %*	*Damage*	*Breakage Points*	*Notes*
Fist	Natural	50%	1D3		
Kick	Natural	25%	1D6		
2-Handed Spear	Thrusting	25%	1D8+1	15	Impales
Sword	Hand	15%	1D8+1	20	
Axe	Hand	25%	1D8+2	15	
Mace	Hand	30%	1D6+2	20	
Dagger	Hand	25%	1D4+2	15	Impales
Rock	Thrown	45%	1D4		
Javelin	Thrown	20%	1D10		Impales
Bow	Missile	10%	1D6		Impales
Shield	Parry	25%		12	Does not break

A disadvantage to all this: weapons which can impale cannot do damage to other weapons. In a fight between a spearsman and a swordsman with shield, for instance, the spearsman is likely to do more damage if he connects, but he is also likely to have his spear whittled into toothpicks by the sword. Want to bet which event decides the outcome of the fight?

USING WEAPONS

Weapons have two uses, attacking and parrying. Each weapon can do only one of these actions in a particular melee round, and the intention of which will happen must be stated during the Statement of Intent phase of the round. Shields, as noted, can only be used for parrying, and bows and thrown weapons can only attack. Since most will carry a hand weapon and a shield, it is possible to make two parries per round without an attack if desired. This is useful if attacked by more than one opponent.

An attack is made by rolling D100 and attempting to roll equal to or lower than your character's attack percentage. Such a roll is a successful attack.

A parry is done in the same way. When a shield is used, it is never necessary to state that a parry will be attempted unless there is more than one foe, whereupon the specific enemy being parried must be pointed out.

RESOLUTION OF MELEE

Fighting is done in "melee rounds." See the next chapter for an explanation of game sequence. For now the point will be that when a number of foes fight, the order in which they strike at each other is important, and is determined by the DEX of the fighters. In the first melee round all creatures with DEX 18 try to strike. Then all creatures with DEX 17 go, then 16, 15, 14, etc., till every character has an opportunity to strike.

Characters parry when they need to, without regard to their DEX. If Bosh Blockhead's DEX is 6, he still can parry Amazing Alfred's DEX 18 blow. There is only one shield parry per character per melee round, but the character can also attack or parry with his weapon, making possible two parries in a round.

Characters and creatures alike may try to hit, and still miss. The defender may or may not parry successfully. In a one-on-one melee, there are four possible results:

...if the attacker's strike...	*...and the defender's parry...*	*...the final result is:*
hits	misses	defender takes damage (armor may absorb some).
hits	parries	defender takes no damage, but if a weapon was used to parry then it takes damage from the attacking strike.*
misses	parries	attacker's weapon takes damage if parried by another weapon.*
misses	misses	no damage anywhere.

** 2-handed spears cause some exceptions; see below.*

If a character or monster takes enough damage to kill him or knock him unconscious before he has gotten his attack, then he never gets to make that attack.

TWO-HANDED SPEARS

This section is simply to bring all the information about this weapon into one place.

Two-handed spears can be used from the second rank. They can be used to attack and parry in a single melee round, or to parry twice. They cannot be used to attack twice a round.

These weapons may impale, thereby doing extra damage as explained previously. Once impaled into a foe, they must be pulled out, requiring at least a full melee round.

Two-handed spears do not damage weapons when they parry an attacking weapon which misses its strike, nor do they damage weapons which parry their successful attack. This makes them an exception to the chart just above.

COMBAT NOTES

Turning from a foe means you cannot parry any attack from that foe. And if someone attacks their target from behind, so that their target cannot see them and jump around, then the attacker gets a 20% bonus added to his ability to hit.

Changing weapons in melee takes a full melee round. While a character is changing weapons, he can parry with his shield or dodge. It takes a full melee round to stop and look all about. In general, a single action can be done in a melee round.

A COMBAT EXAMPLE

Two characters, Able and Dair, have discovered why they have one fewer lambs than they should. After half a day of cross-country tracking, find two baboons devouring the missing lamb. Able and Dair brought no armor, knowing they would need to move quickly to catch the villains. They decide to attack. The baboons hear then coming and pick up their weapons, too. The fight is on!

Able has a sword and shield; his DEX is 12. Dair has a spear, plus an axe strapped to his back; his DEX is 15. Baboon Screech has a mace and shield; his DEX is 13. Baboon Bellow has only rocks and natural weapons, but his DEX is 17. All are at 50% with all weapons, and have CON 15 each.

ROUND ONE

First attacker is Bellow (DEX 17). He attacks Able. Bellow rolls 45, a hit! Able gets his shield up with a 35, and the baboon's blow bounces off. Next attack is Dair with DEX 15. He rolls 32, a hit! But Screech parries with his shield, and the blow is nullified. Screech now attacks, rolling 75, a miss. Then Able thrusts with his sword, and hits on a roll of 22. Bellow has no shield and so cannot parry. He is hit. Able's sword does 5 points damage to his foe. The baboon is hurtng now!

Since these DEX won't change, the rest of the sequence will be the same. The attacks in order will go to Bellow vs. Able, Dair vs. Screech, Screech vs. Dair, and Able vs. Bellow.

ROUND TWO

Screech says he will parry with his mace, not his shield.

Bellow, bloody but undaunted, attacks again, and misses with a roll of 83. Just as well for Able, who missed his parry.

Dair attacks Screech again and misses with a 64. Screech parries with a 22, and makes it.Screech rolls 1D6+2 for mace damage and gets the full 8 points! There is now a crack in Dair's spear, and he should be careful. But since Screech parried with his weapon, he gets no attack this round.

Able Attacks last, and rolls 72, another miss!

ROUND THREE

Bellow hits! Able misses his parry. But Bellow rolls only 2 points of damage, almost inconsequential.

Dair attacks next, and hit again with a 42. Screech shield parries with a 44, then scores agains! Dair parries with his spear, but Screech rolls 7 points damage, breaking it in two! Able lunges at Bellow, rolls 48 and hits again. Bellow, parry-less, takes 5 more points damage, and howls terribly!

ROUND FOUR

The Statements of Intent are important. The humans are first. Able says he will press his attack against wounded Bellow, but Dair will withdraw slightly and pull out his axe. Bellow, in no mood for further combat, says he'll turn and run, hoping to outdistance his foe after one combat round Screech seizes his chance and strikes at the momentarily unarmed Dair.

At the first strike (Bellow has no attack and Dair is drawing his axe), Screech hits for 3 points of damage which Dair cannot parry. Able attacks fleeing Bellow; attacking from behind gives +20% to his attack. He rolls 61, hitting for 3 more points of damage. Bellow lopes away, bleeding profusely, but glad to be alive.

ROUND FIVE

Screech sees that he has two foes now, rather than one. He declares he will turn and flee before Able can reach him Dair will attack, also getting a +20% for a rear attack But he misses, and the farmers watch Screech run out of sight. They decide not to pursue: after all, they've driven off the thieves and given them a satisfying drubbing in the process, and the farmers have their own wounds to heal.

VII. Game Sequence

TIME, GAME SCALE, AND TURN SEQUENCE

Time scales measure the passing of events and define the amount of movement possible in a turn. There can be different scales, depending on the game being played.

LARGE SCALE TIME: THE GAME WEEK & FULL DAY

This scale is of minor use unless your characters are racing against time. Time passes quickly on this scale, and generally is used to explain past events or cover travel periods. In some games it important for training or study .

Movement in this scale assumes 10 hours per game day.

Walking Movement - 20 kilometers per day.

Marching Movement - 30 kilometers per day.

Riding Movement - 20 kilometers per day (animals are moving at a walk, possibly accompanied by wagons).

Cavalry Movement - 40 kilometers per day (riding animals unhindered by wagons, going at walk-trot-walk pace).

SCENARIO SCALE TIME: THE FULL TURN

A full turn indicates 5 minutes of time, and is used to describe the passage of time as an adventuring party is engaged in scenario actions like walking, climbing, searching, and so on.

Man Cautiously Advancing - 120 meters in 5 minutes.

Man Strolling - 240 meters in 5 minutes.

Man Running - 2000 meters in 5 minutes.

Riding Animals: double the above rates.

COMBAT TIME: THE MELEE ROUND

A melee round is used during combat or other tense situations where seconds count. It is approximately 12 seconds long and is defined as the time needed to perform one complete action. 'One complete action' includes an attack and a parry, or preparing and throwing a rope, or looking around an area long enough to use Spot Hidden Item or Listening, or preparing and lighting a torch, or changing weapons, or mounting and settling on a horse, or speaking clearly to others nearby, and so on.

In a melee round, all humans and other 2-legged folk move not more than 24 meters.

In a melee round, all 4-legged types move not more than 36 meters.

If a character or creature aims solely at getting away or at following someone who is getting away, 2-legged movement should be doubled, and 4-legged movement should be tripled.

TURN SEQUENCE: KEEPING ORDER DURING PLAY

Because this is a game, it simulates the perception of a real situation, but does not reproduce it exactly. It is necessary to impose an external order upon play to keep events moving smoothly. This external order is called the turn sequence. Events occur without confusion as long as it is followed.

During game weeks the passage of events is conversational. The referee tells what has happened and should be prepared to answer questions casually and completely without resorting to formal turn sequence.

Similarly, the referee will narrate the sequence of events in scenario scale segments (5 minute segments) or even longer ones when nothing significant occurs (there's no point in repeating the phrase "nothing new" for 20 times during an uneventful passage, though the referee may want to throw out false clues or threats occasionally to keep the party interested).

Melee scale gets more complex, since individual characters become intimately involved in the action. Here there is a strict sequence or order of play, which should be closely followed. This sequence can also be used for other time scale.

1. **Statement of Intent**
2. **Movement of Non-Engaged Characters**
3. **Resolution of Melee, Magic, etc.**
4. **Bookkeeping**

Statement of Intent. During this phase, the players and referee formally state what their characters will do that melee round. It is usual for the referee to state intentions first in one round, then have the players state first in the following round, but this varies, and the referee should follow whatever method he prefers. During the round the stated action may be changed, but another action may not be substituted. For instance, the statement may be, "I will fire an arrow at that troll," but if the referee states that the troll is dodging behind cover, so that you haven't a clear shot, you can abort the shot but cannot choose another target nor perform another action.

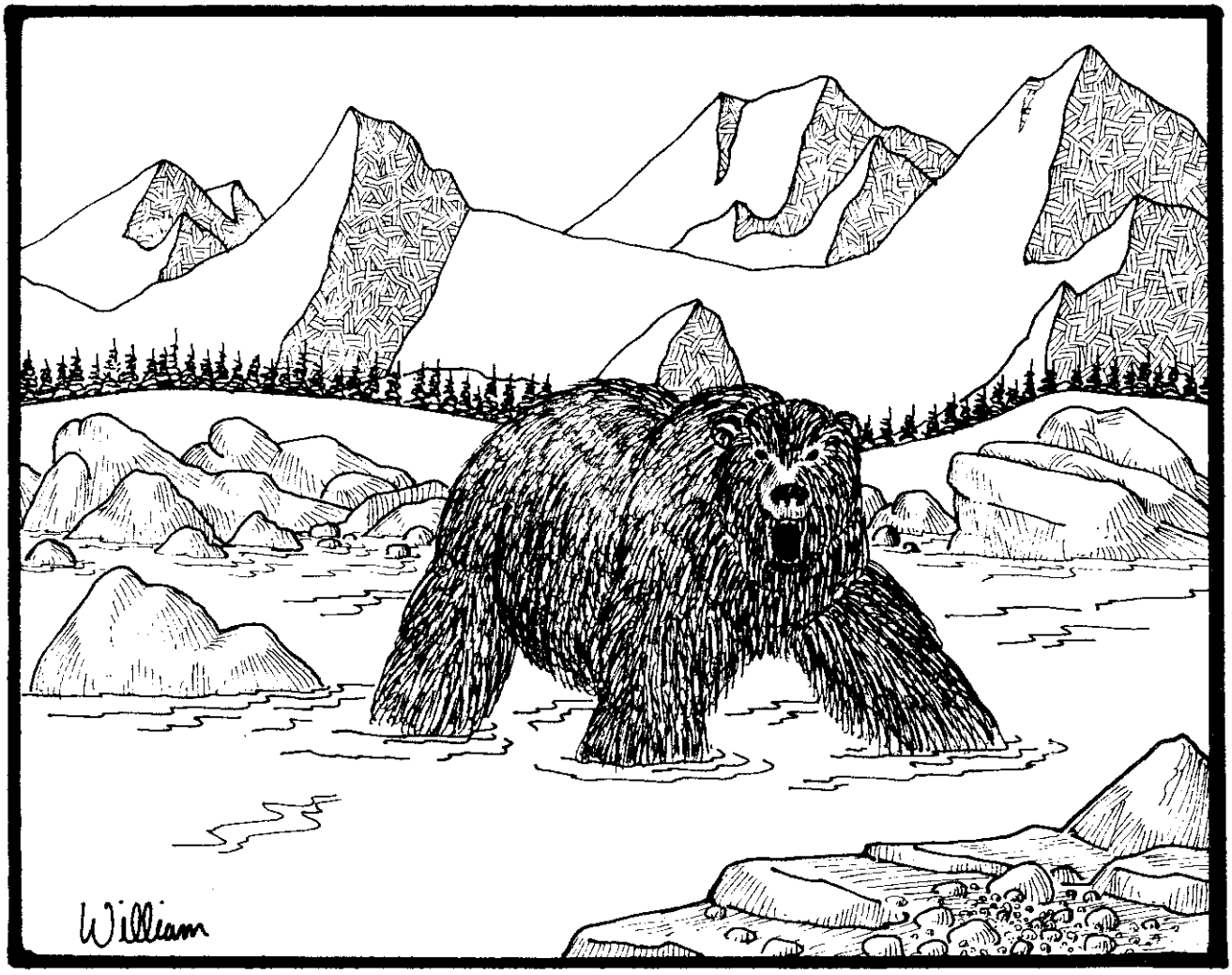
Movement of Non-Engaged Characters. Now the characters, both players and referee-controlled characters, can be moved about. This may bring some forces into action. As a rule of thumb, moving characters will not engage in melee in the round in which they moved and met, but will be able to fight next round. Likewise, if that troll didn't move but spent the round waiting for you to run up to it, then it cannot fight either, and must wait till next round.

Resolution of Melee. Now all attacks, parries, and missile firings are resolved.

Determine which person or monster hits first by checking their DEX. The higher DEXs go first, followed by the successively lower DEXs until everyone has struck. If a character is knocked unconscious or killed before he strikes, then he cannot make a return blow.

Missiles shot in melee will always be resolved before any hand combat.

Bookkeeping. In this phase everyone records damage, healing, or successful use of a skill on their character sheet.



VIII. A Solo Scenario

The Old Widow Marshum, your neighbor, has been complaining that a bear is stealing her chickens and she can't do anything about it. She is looking for someone to put an end to such goings on. She has heard that your character is pretty adventurous, and has sent a message asking if you would help her out. Are you interested? If so, go to her place and talk it over.

She is desperate for any help. She has lost half her chickens and fears for her cattle. She is offering your character something special for success: a suit of Ring Mail which belonged to her husband. It protects like 4 points of armor and can be worn over leather armor, giving a total of 6 points of protection. Quite an improvement! However only the person bringing back proof of the bear's death will get the prize.

The bear bothering her farm can't be too tough, since it prefers nabbing chickens to living naturally in the hills. The old woman thinks it may be ill, or injured, but that is likely to make it more dangerous to a hunter.

She tells you that if you go, she will send along a flask of magical healing potion. When drunk, this will restore tissue torn by up to 5 points of damage. Thus if a character took 8 points of damage, and then drank the potion, there would be only 3 points of damage left. It is not possible to drink this beforehand and get your hit points higher than natural, though. If unused, the widow will want the potion back.

She shows you its tracks, and you set off. If you neglected to check your weapons before, here's what you brought: a suit of 2-point armor, a shield, a hand weapon of your choice (see the last page of this book), a spear, and a bow and arrows. Decide what you'll be carrying in hand as you track the bear-what you decide could be important.

Now, try to make your Listening roll. Make it? If so, you heard a stick snap nearby. If you made it, then try to make your Spot Hidden roll. If you made that, then you see where the bear is hiding.

If you didn't make the Listening roll, then your character keeps on walking. If you made the Listening but not the Spot Hidden, then he walks cautiously with the stated weapon in hand.

The bear attacks! If you did not make your Listening, then it has surprised you and will get a free attack at your character. If you made the Listening but not the Spot Hide den, then it gets first attack and all you can do is parry against it the first melee round. If you made both rolls, then you go right to normal melee sequence.

Here are the stats for the bear. Only those numbers relevant to the melee have been included.

BEAR

STR 17 CON 13 SIZ 17	*Weapons:*
POW 10 DEX 16	*Right Claw, 35% attack, 2D6 damage*
Total Hit Points 13	*Left Claw, 30% attack, 2D6 damage*
Armor 2 point Skin	*Bite, 45%, 1D6+1D8 damage*

Remember that the bear cannot parry but gets two attacks per round. Probably it will bite and strike with one paw each round. You may parry twice (with your shield and with your weapon) but you sure won't harm the bear much that way. Choose which attack you'll parry, and hope the other does not strike home as you try to kill the beast.

Once you have hit it twice, the bear will turn its back (giving you a free strike at it) and attempt to run away. The bear moves faster than a person on foot and so it can flee if it is not killed.

What will you do when it flees? Need time to drink that Healing potion? Will you do that first? Did you think to pull out your bow and shoot at the bear as it fled? What about throwing your spear like a javelin? If you did, do you want to go into the brush and try to find it?

The bear's trail leads to a small, nearby cave. You know the bear went inside. Your character should have little desire to go into a dark, close place and melee with a wounded bear. What will you do to collect the reward now?

You have many options besides the obvious one of fighting blind. How about building a fire at the mouth and smoking it out? How about Hiding until it reveals itself, then shooting it with an arrow? Want to go back and ask the Widow Marshum for a chicken to use as bait? Make up a plan, then stick to it.

WHAT NEXT?

The next step is to get into a real game. *Basic Role-Playing* is designed to fit into a large number of other games which are currently available or being prepared right now. This may be a fantasy campaign, either in RuneQuest's Glorantha or some place like the Young Kingdoms of Elric; it can be in historical times, whether medieval Japan or the heroic Age of Sail; it can be in relatively modern times, where you tackle the horrors of the Cthulthu cultists, or in the realm of King Arthur, or in science fiction's million worlds.

Joining a campaign may require some more rules reading, but if you already have a referee, then check with him for the details you'll need. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and you'll begin a new hobby providing new friends and unlimited enjoyment. High school and college campuses frequently have role-playing clubs, and game store personnel often know of open campaigns. Magazines such as Different Worlds and The Dragon frequently carry lists of players wishing to be contacted.

Beginning your own campaign is somewhat more time-consuming and more rewarding as well. Chaosium provides many scenarios and play-aids which are ready for instant use after an initial reading. Such products can guide newcomers and to act as the heart of campaigns when the referee has the energy and inclination but lacks the time to prepare details.

HAPPY GAMING!

For a current illustrated catalog, write to Chaosium Inc., Box 6302, Albany, Calif., 94706.